



Good Afternoon Roots Students,

Before all else, I need you to know that at Roots International Academy, we love you. I love you. Even in pain and harm, and what we may find as disagreement, I want you to know, I love you.

Last night the OUSD Board of Directors voted to close our school at the end of this year. For some of you, this may come as a shock — for others, you may not be so surprised. Like any emotion, it's okay to feel however you feel. That's natural. Sadness, anger, joy, fear, excitement; these are all okay.

I'm writing this to you because I owe it to you to take responsibility for my part in this process. My part in decision-making as your Principal and my part in any of the feelings you're feeling now.

Why Roots? You may have heard something like 'it's all about numbers.' And though our staff at Roots may not operate just like that— systems and programs, schools and organizations, these are all built on numbers. For example, we are a school because 266 students show up everyday.

The numbers across our city of Oakland don't look so good right now. At Roots, they haven't looked so good for a while and based on how the school district predicts future years, it doesn't look like it's going to get better. Less students come every year, which impacts everything from the teachers and staff we can hire and the programs we can offer. Ultimately, if the school were to remain open next year, it's my opinion that Roots and Roots students would get less. Larger class sizes, less support people and less programs. Less.

When I was approached and informed that Roots would be slated for closure either this year or next, I used my voice and opinion to say that I didn't think our campus could take any more hits to our program and team. We are who we are and we've grown because of amazing people and because of exciting new programs like art, dance, and the Think Tank team. These aren't just privileges, they are what I believe you and every Middle Schooler in Oakland deserves. This is one of the many reasons and my main reason why I have supported not continuing into next year.

So What's Next? We are deeply committed to helping you find the middle school to best fit your needs. That may look different for each student. Our goal is that every Roots student will get priority to an open space at any OUSD Middle School in Oakland for the next year. Whether it's close or far or has a robotics club or cheerleading team, we want to make sure you can continue your school career in a place that is fun, welcoming, and will prepare you for high school! This process will begin at the end of this week and throughout the month, where we look forward to meeting with you and your families to set up a good match for next year.

Beyond that, it's all about celebrating the rich history of Roots and finishing out this year with honor and pride. That means spending as much time together in learning endeavors like the Roots EXPO as well as enjoying new events to commemorate our community like a block party BBQ, school wide dinner dance, and field trips throughout the Bay Area.

Our Roots family is strong. And without a doubt, I believe that's what makes this the hardest. Change is hard, and seeing others around us deal with the emotions it can bring often makes it even harder. Nonetheless, one thing that must be emphasized in all of this is that none of the situation currently at Roots is your fault. In the papers, online and in social media, you're bound to hear things about "Quality Schools" and "Quality Programs." As our teachers and students so passionately demonstrated yesterday evening, quality starts with the people, and in all my 10 years, it has always started with you.

The conversation continues. With all the love,